

Pathways to Quality through Health Information Technology

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Summary: Recent legislative initiatives and new care delivery approaches have highlighted the importance of timely, targeted quality metrics, and the essential role of a robust and supportive information infrastructure. Significant progress has been made in understanding the requirements, capabilities, and best practices of such information systems. However, the sharp increase in initiatives to integrate measurement of health care quality and health information technology (IT) underscore that gaps in knowledge persist.

AHRQ's longstanding investment in building the evidence base on quality measurement through health IT is exemplified by the Ambulatory Safety and Quality Enabling Quality Measurement funding opportunity announcement, which supported innovative demonstrations, approaches, and methodological work. To continue such efforts, AHRQ seeks to further understand trends in health IT-related health care quality measurement that describe near-term (1-2 years) requirements, mid-term (3-5 years) issues, and issues that must be addressed.

To this end, this project will engage in activities such as asking for public comments through a request for information and holding focus groups with experts and key stakeholder groups to articulate current obstacles to improving quality through health IT. This will inform a key deliverable of the project—the final report—that will attempt to characterize an ideal future health information infrastructure for actionable and prioritized national quality measurement and reporting.

Project Objectives:

- Develop a background report on the current state of quality measurement through health IT and relevant initiatives in health IT and quality measurement. **(Achieved)**
- Gather stakeholder input on gaps in resources and knowledge in health IT and quality measurement. **(Ongoing)**
- Develop a final report **(Upcoming)**

2012 Activities: Staff completed background research and published an *[Environmental Snapshot—Quality Measurement Enabled by Health IT: Overview, Possibilities, and Challenges](#)*, which reported on the current state of health IT-enabled quality measurement, articulated some broad elements of the next generation of quality measurement identified in current literature, and identified gaps in knowledge and ways to achieve the ideal future state.

Staff developed a request for information (RFI) to examine stakeholder perspectives on some of the identified key issues and challenges to achieving the next generation of quality measurement. AHRQ received 63 responses to the RFI, including representation from a variety of stakeholders such as measure developers, providers, and associations representing providers, vendors, payers, and consumer-oriented organizations. Staff analyzed the RFI responses to determine trends, challenges, and practical solutions

for the near- and mid-term.

Results are being used to frame and develop questions for six stakeholder focus group sessions in 2013. Five focus groups will be stakeholder-specific to include no more than nine participants representing each of the following groups: measure developers, payers, providers, consumers, and vendors. Questions will be tailored to evoke issues and possible solutions from each group's particular perspective. A final cross-stakeholder group will discuss common and consistent issues, as well as areas of divergence that arose in the stakeholder-specific groups.

Preliminary Impact and Findings: The project has no findings to date.

Target Population: General

Strategic Goal: To develop and disseminate health IT evidence and evidence-based tools to improve health care decisionmaking through the use of integrated data and knowledge management.

Business Goal: Knowledge Creation
